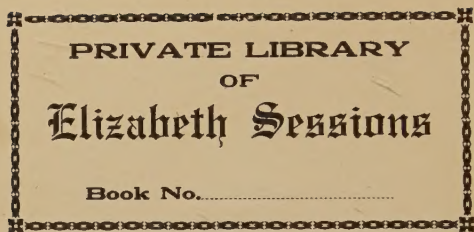


Lava  
Lane

Nathalia  
Crane



PRIVATE LIBRARY  
OF  
Elizabeth Sessions

Book No. ....







LAVA LANE  
AND OTHER POEMS

*By the same author*

THE JANITOR'S BOY

And Other Poems

# LAVA LANE

AND OTHER POEMS

by

*Nathalia Crane*



New York

THOMAS SELTZER

1925



Copyright 1925, by  
THOMAS SELTZER, INC.

---

*All rights reserved*

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



TO  
MY MOTHER



# CONTENTS

## Chartless

LAVA LANE . . . . .	1
THE FIRST ARTISTS . . . . .	5
BABEL . . . . .	7
THE CANTILEVER BAR . . . . .	9
THE SLEEP WALKERS . . . . .	11
MINN . . . . .	14

## Sport

CLEOPATRA . . . . .	19
THE TELLTALE . . . . .	20
SADNESS . . . . .	22
THE SHOE-SHINE SPREE . . . . .	23

## Fame

THE RANKER . . . . .	27
THE LIARS . . . . .	29
THE LOST TRUMPET . . . . .	30
A CHINESE PRINCE . . . . .	31

## Saints and Reformers

THE FIRST REFORMER . . . . .	35
SUNDAY MORNING . . . . .	37
THE MAKING OF A SAINT . . . . .	38
THE READER . . . . .	40
THE EDICT . . . . .	41
THE HANGMAN'S BOY . . . . .	42

## Honorable Mention

THE WARMING PAN . . . . .	45
DIANA OF THE GARDEN . . . . .	47
THE RENEGADE . . . . .	49
THE PLEDGE . . . . .	53

## Plumes

THE PLAYBOX . . . . .	57
LOVE LANE . . . . .	58
THE PEACOCK FEATHERS . . . . .	59
LEDA AND THE LARK . . . . .	60
THE PICTURE BOOK QUEEN . . . . .	62
THE REFUGEE . . . . .	64
THE LAW . . . . .	65
DESTINY . . . . .	66
THE WARNING . . . . .	67
THE DISCOVERER . . . . .	68



# CHARTLESS



## LAVA LANE

A starry ember of the skies, a friction-tortured  
zone

Fell from a heavenly fireplace to orbit of its own.

The seasons soothed each cicatrix as 'round the  
sun it whirled,

Contented as a cinder foreordained to be a world.

The protoplasm double-timed, the aeons ran like  
rain,

Up went a sultry curtain on the stage of Lava  
Lane.

A summer incantation tied the shimmers to the  
trees,

The peris glimpsed the splendors of the painted  
ferneries,

A flower flamed, a parrot screamed, night spread  
her peacock tail,

And beauty tripped the platform of that lilac-  
tinted vale.

It was the first performance and the Moon a  
spotlight threw,

Each rosebud was a nocturne clad in nothing  
more than dew.

A prompter squatted on a crag—his rapture  
ranked his skill,  
The cue lines spurted as cascades in eagerness to  
spill.

The cliffside caverns were the stalls, the prim-  
itives were there,  
The snowdrop and the dinosaur, the crocus and  
the bear,

The pythons long as parasangs, the robust but-  
terflies—  
So strong that twixt their wings they bore great  
vats of sweet supplies.

'Twas all upon a kinder scale, more colorful and  
vast.  
The fountains jetted slowly in the faith that they  
would last.

Now he who spoils a pastoral would tantalize a  
nun;  
There came to reign in Lava Lane the Prophet  
Number One.

He ripped apart the border props, he diapered  
the rose,  
The lead he made a mummy of in woolens to her  
toes.



He turned the back-drops inside out for that  
persuasive play,  
But while he scanned a make-up box the  
prompter stole away.

The script was in an arbor hid—the vines began  
to swell,  
Conditioned by a secret not a vineyard dared to  
tell.

It was a tense conspiracy and Lava Lane stood  
mute  
Depending on a partizan—the silence of the  
fruit.

Each mother marked her armful with a pucker of  
the lip,  
An early reservation lest a wonder stutter drip.

The tiger tiptoed down the years, the monkey  
bit his tongue,  
The secret rested sweetly where the purple  
grapes were hung.

And yet that prophet catechized the canyons of  
the mole,  
The babies' cribs were rumped and he raked the  
adder's hole.

He never found that manuscript but dying left  
a son  
Instructed in the palsies of the Prophet Number  
One.

Oh, still we dream deliverance, a lilac-tinted fane,  
A playhouse where the billboards dare to picture  
Lava Lane.

We hear an ancient overture, the night bird's  
violin,  
A curtain rises slowly on the verities of Minn,

The earthiness and ecstasy, the heritage benign,  
The pastoral we trusted to the flagons of the  
vine.

## THE FIRST ARTISTS

In Lava Lane were artists  
Who swung the chalk with glee.  
The pool proclaimed with circle,  
The down-stroke was the tree.

On canvas of the caverns  
With fundamental mirth  
They outlawed Eva's girdle,  
Drew Adam as at birth.

No background jammed a vision,  
No border awed a soul,  
They overran the pushpins  
To draw the fishing pole.

They posed the lava bubbles,  
The baby's unborn tooth,  
Diameters were goaded  
Until the chalk was truth.

The tints of wild contentment  
Were ever in their sighs,  
They fled not from the orgies  
When mothers shut their eyes.

Those galleries no longer  
Connive against the blue,  
An angel mined the dugouts  
Because they were too true.

And yet some sultry morning  
    May show where art still bides—  
An urchin at a billboard  
    And chalking up both sides.



## BABEL

We loved your lime-stained lecturns—  
The trestles leaping high,  
The slogan of your derricks  
To underpin the sky.

A planet held the plumb-line  
And fooled us from afar,  
But we went marching upward—  
The perpendicular.

We still resent the moment  
We heard a buttress gape,  
The scaling ladders calling  
To hasten our escape.

Your towers turned to torrents,  
Your walls waved like a fan.  
We threw away the sheepskins  
And for the slide poles ran.

The moon is meditative,  
Morose the Milky Way  
To see the trestles crumpled,  
The derricks in decay.

And yet the horizontal  
Bequeatheth naught of shame,  
For other campaniles  
We chant the builders' fame.

With grace we give to Gizeh  
Another thousand tiers;  
Who tilts the Wall of China  
May make up our arrears.

But we, the chastened, seek not  
To overcrowd the skies;  
We kneel beside the fires  
And watch the halos rise.

## THE CANTILEVER BAR

Beside the red Euphrates,  
Beside the reedy Nile,  
We feasted with the mallet  
And entertained the file.

The bulls of Nin we chiseled,  
Oh, Bel and Balthazar,  
But for the Theban pylons  
The cantilever bar.

We gave the Sphynx a status,  
Raised Pharos from our skids,  
And with the nudes of Nubia  
We posed the Pyramids.

We milked the buxom quarries  
Of porphery and verd;  
The marble saw us beckon,  
Disrobed without a word.

'Twas maul and pawl and cable,  
A kiss each parasang,  
The drivers' whips caressing  
The cantilever gang.

The thimble nudged the needle,  
No more there is to tell,  
But clean our gabardines are—  
We slew not Jezebel.

We never mixed the mortar,  
We never laid that wall,  
Nor were we even present  
To catalogue her fall.

But had we seen her totter,  
That lovely Sidon witch,  
We would have piled our cloutings  
In any city ditch.

And had she landed lightly,  
Oh, Bel and Balthazar,  
Fame would have made her bookmark  
The cantilever bar.



## THE SLEEP WALKERS

You who read the rituals  
Scrawled about the rose,  
This concerns a journey  
'Twixt a camel's toes.

In an old oasis  
Basined like a shell  
There abode a red bloom—  
Rajah of the Well.

Round his porphery frontiers  
Yellow billows ran,  
Overhead a vapor  
Becked the caravan.

'Cross those saffron sand dunes  
'Twixt a camel's toes  
Came an alien seedling,  
Grew another rose,

Quite unlike the first one,  
Pallid as the dew,  
And a desert teasel  
Stood between the two.

Love that nudged the by-laws,  
Made the statues lean,  
Eyed that arid teasel  
Standing in between.

Sent the dusk—a dervish  
Waving regnant arms;  
All the mangroves nodded,  
Drowsy were the palms.

From an ancient nullah  
With authority  
Was dispensed the darkness,  
Censorless and free.

Fountains juiced with poppy  
Sprayed on every hand;  
Fell the teasel's girdle  
Clinking to the sand.

Prayed that ardent alien  
As the flower prays:  
Save me from the blemish—  
Heartbreak of the vase.

Pondered she o'er cradles  
'Twixt the camel's toes;  
Swooned and by a well-spring  
Saw that other rose.

As the sleeper walketh  
Chartless but serene,  
So she flanked the teasel  
Lolling in between.

At that very hour,  
    Orienting chance,  
Went a well-side rajah  
    Straying down a trance,

Far beyond the candles  
    Of the catechists,  
Treading to a tangent—  
    Two somnambulists,

In that old oasis  
    Never more forlorn,  
Passing on the rosebud,  
    Handing down the thorn,

Giving breath to heaven  
    For the new ones' need,  
Tutoring the leafage,  
    Lanterning the weed,

Halting all the aeons  
    O'er a flower rite,  
Resurrecting Eden  
    As it was at night.

You who read the rituals  
    Scrawled about the rose—  
Love that lacks the howdah  
    Takes a camel's toes.

## MINN

Minn, the first of old men,  
Dawn upon his knee,  
Tells of his adventures  
With solemnity.

Loitering as a toddler  
Where the lava flows,  
Dipped a little fat leg,  
Burned off all his toes.

Bordering on seven—  
Bow and arrow wise—  
Drew upon a wildcat,  
Nearly lost his eyes.

As a youth he dawdled  
Where the fishers dwell,  
Learned about the globules  
Hidden in a shell,

Got himself an oyster,  
Pillaged for the pearl.  
From a skein of seaweed  
Rose a water-girl,

Seized that lustrous globule,  
Glided from his side,  
Mocked him from a billow:  
"Wait another tide."

Minn, the first of old men,  
Grieveth o'er the tricks  
Played by lava puddles,  
Claws the wildcat flicks,

Warns against the mermaids—  
Dawn upon his knee—  
Talks about disaster  
With solemnity.





# SPORT



## CLEOPATRA

The darlings of the doorstep have no rights  
Tho' rigged with names that old resorts would  
cheer;

They see the tawny rosebud tread the nights,  
And go unclocked—a garden Guinevere.

Believing in the butter and the bread,  
They peer beyond the frontiers of a frown;  
Betimes they list to angels deeply read,  
Then turn those vellumed versions upside  
down.

They long to trade a flathouse for a Troy,  
The foreground of a doorstep for a fen;  
They would—but their tough mothers take a joy  
In saying: "Cleopatra's only ten."

Cleopatra—Cleopatra,  
Do you see the Pharos Light?  
Do you think that Caesar's galley  
Will make the Nile tonight?

Cleopatra—Cleopatra,  
You were always mother's hope;  
There's a galley in the bathroom—  
And a little piece of soap.

## THE TELLTALE

The janitor's boy bought a catalogue boat,  
'Twas ballasted down to the Plim.  
He offered to me half the cabin quite free  
If I would go cruising with him.

His eyes, they were flecked like the mackerel  
skies,

His hair was a beautiful red.  
No gay brigantine could so sweetly careen  
As that catalogue boat, so he said.

Its anchor was ebony, even the flukes,  
The ship's bell was made of cut glass;  
From top gallant clew to where main royal grew  
The hamper was all done in brass.

The port and the starboard lights, both of them  
bronze,  
The galley stove modeled in gold,  
The wheel and the heel of the bowsprit and keel  
Were rosewood, and so was the hold.

Our tackle was ivory right from the tusk,  
The topping lifts heavy with silk,  
And all of the cleats, with the reef points and  
sheets,  
Were whiter than Paradise milk.

Each runway was ribboned with cutlasses grim,  
The gats of the broadsides were veiled,  
No port captain knew of the fathoms we drew  
Because we were sunk 'ere we sailed.

The log showed a clearing date one Monday  
morn,  
The powder in Number Two hold,  
We were rigged as the jack but alas, and alack,  
That telltale ship's bell up and told.

A renegade gong full of cut-glass deceit,  
Not daring to take to the sea,  
Went blabbing till blue on an innocent crew—  
The janitor's laddie and me.

The householders scuttled our catalogue boat—  
Oh, God will forgive them some day.  
A billow they buttonholed, frothy and cold,  
And sank it ten feet in the bay.

We watched from a coastline and dimmed as we  
gazed,  
We knelt when it started to drown.  
The bowsprit did cant with a heavenly slant,  
The ensign was all upside down.

But sometimes the sorrow begetteth the joy;  
A clamor arose from a swell,  
The causer of woe was just going below—  
That timorous telltale the bell.

## SADNESS

Oh, Mr. Jackson swept the court,  
And he said to me: "It's very good sport,  
"But I don't like the children pert  
"To play around on my beautiful dirt.

"And we've got to keep things fairly so,  
"Or the flowers in the court won't ever grow."  
Then he gave a frown and rubbed his nose,  
And pointed at footprints around a rose.

We were all in the court; he called our names.  
There were games he said, and games and  
games—

But it wasn't a game to be so pert  
And play around on his beautiful dirt.

Then he took his broom and swept some more,  
He swept the dirt as you sweep the floor,  
And whenever a footprint left no doubt,  
He spoke the names of us right straight out.

We each one got it and good and plain.  
'Twas Marg'ret, Nathalia, Louise Duschane;  
'Twas Georgie and Bobbie (as little as he),  
And he didn't forget Jack Witherby.

And as we got it we walked away.  
We did not play in the court that day.  
We felt quite sad and not so pert,  
And all on account of the beautiful dirt.



## THE SHOE-SHINE SPREE

Once on a time I was wedded  
Unto a husband of nine,  
Then came his mother and took him  
Off for an old sandal shine.

Beautiful dolls—I have plenty—  
Clasping them unto my heart;  
They look so much like their father  
I could forgive him in part.

Yet when I think of that mother  
Taking my husband from me,  
I feel like raiding the corner—  
Ending that shoe-shining spree.



# FAME



## THE RANKER

There was only one first sergeant  
Who ever went to France,  
To walk that wintry terrace—  
The Zone of the Advance.

He wore no leather leggins,  
No Sam Brown belt in Gaul;  
He only wore a ribbon  
That ranked the China Wall.

We backed him with an ensign  
Above the vestibule;  
It flapped against a window  
Three thousand miles from Toul.

We conned the lists each evening,  
The casualties that came;  
We blessed the New York papers—  
They would not run his name.

And when the ranks were eased,  
The sergeant came once more;  
He brought me all the belt plates  
The foeman ever wore;

He brought me all the buttons  
From off the German gray;  
The Rhine still weeps for helmets  
That mother gave away.

Now when they rise for heroes  
A tigress taps her heel;  
A cobra in an eyeball  
Begins to sway with zeal.

Perchance there was a marshal  
Somewhere along the lines;  
They may have used a major  
To make the countersigns.

We don't deny a colonel,  
A captain or a lance—  
But only one first sergeant  
Who ever went to France.

## THE LIARS

We were the castanet units  
Nicked in the Zone of Advance,  
We were the shameless survivals,  
We were the liars from France.

Gunners who tripped o'er the tripods,  
Casualties dug from a cave,  
Buddies arrayed in the bandage,  
Groomed for a grenadier's grave.

We were the prides of the litters  
Lacking in only a knell,  
Hearing the field station mutter:  
"This one will never get well."

Some of us got compensation—  
All of the half of a year;  
Some of us got observation  
Over refusals to cheer.

Still, there are times we are happy  
Soothed by this one circumstance—  
We can talk Front Line with Black Jack,  
We are the liars from France.



## THE LOST TRUMPET

It lies in a Brooklyn garret,  
A symbol of glory mislaid,  
The trumpet that sounded the order—  
The Charge of the Light Brigade.

The bugle of Balaklava—  
The first of the orisons—  
It holdeth the chant of the horses,  
The roar of the Russian guns.

It lies in a Brooklyn garret  
In glorious truancy there.  
But fame needs no framework or easel,  
Not even a Trafalgar Square.

## A CHINESE PRINCE

Of all the shops I fancy there's a Chinese one I  
know  
That sells the brodered slipper with the dragon  
on the toe.

And I was never dreaming of a prince when I  
strayed in,  
But there he was upon a rug, his name was Tantu  
Min.

His mother had him gerbed in silk, the rice was  
on the floor.  
He rose, and Buddha never did a thing like that  
before.

He rose—that baby pagan, just beyond the belly  
band,  
And balanced on a tipsy heel to show a god can  
stand.

He waved an oriental fan for me to go his way;  
He handed me a box of tea and sweetly said:  
“No pay.”

Oh, Tantu Min is very rich, a porcelain bank he  
owns,  
The priceless colored lanterns and the idols made  
of bones,

A censer ribboning a cloud, pagodas and the like,  
The strings of golden gongs that chime when  
anyone doth strike,

The junks refitting on the screens while teapot  
cargos grow—  
Those little brodered slippers with the dragon  
on the toe.

If Tantu Min but gets the chance to reach to  
top shelf height,  
I know he'll turn unto that road where Buddha  
swung the light.

But Tantu Min when he goes forth to seek the  
perfect way,  
He must not give to every maid some tea and  
say: "No pay."

For if he does, Alas! Alack! Oh, misery and  
woe!  
He'd best beware of dragons with a slipper on  
each toe.

# SAINTS AND REFORMERS



## THE FIRST REFORMER

It was a primal twilight tense,  
Heat swathed the steaming downs,  
When suddenly a flower cried:  
"Oh, let's take off our gowns."

No arrogance of modesty—  
The time was all too hot;  
The sap was pouring from the trees,  
The pools began to clot.

A passionate poinsettia stripped  
Herself of sarcenet green,  
A lily shook her sindon off,  
A rose her gabardine,

The honeysuckle cast her sheath,  
Strove hard to hide a mole,  
The poppy ripped her chemisette  
And screamed: "I have a soul."

Across the downs a hummingbird  
Came dipping through the bowers,  
He pivoted on emptiness  
To scrutinize the flowers.

But as he paused to clarify  
Amazing visionings,  
The perfumes drew him down unto  
The loveliest of things.

Bewildered the poinsettia blushed  
And grabbed a bit of grass,  
The honeysuckle held her breath,  
The poppy sighed, "Alas."

The roses called him renegade,  
The lilies shut their eyes;  
Down rushed that ruby-throated wretch—  
A sultan from the skies.

He wooed the daunted odalisques,  
He kissed each downcast nude,  
He whispered that an angel's robe  
Was merely attitude.

He sang of love's own liveries,  
Of sunburn, tan and verve,  
Of little Nordic freckles posed  
To punctuate a curve.

He begged them not to gown again,  
Caressed away their shame.  
He was the first reformer crowned  
With accidental fame.



## SUNDAY MORNING

God, on a Sunday morning,  
Sits in his old armchair  
Comforting May Madonna—  
Slip-heel who fell the stair.

God, on a Sunday morning,  
Rabble around his knee,  
Counting the Yiddish babies,  
Jouncing the Ebony,

Driving the Nordic cross-eyed  
Over the bark-skinned bow,  
Telling a saffron silly  
Something she yearned to know.

Teaching the Chinese cherubs  
Little slow-motion jigs,  
Cannibal babes to nibble  
Nothing but sugared figs,

Waving the popcorn scepter,  
Tossing the tamarind,  
Hiding his bags of thunder  
Under the rain and wind.

God, on a Sunday morning,  
Reaching the dotage stage,  
Tearing up all the blacklists—  
Making the adults rage.

## THE MAKING OF A SAINT

She died in a disarrayed garret  
In a vacuous sort of a house.  
The lords of the rafters were sorry—  
The spider, the moth, and the mouse.

They felt that a burden was on them.  
Surmising the needs of a soul,  
In conclave they swore to her virtues  
And crisscrossed a character scroll.

The spider concocted a halo,  
It floated a flat balloon;  
The moth made the sign of the pinions  
That opened the first cocoon;

The mouse did a modesty duty,  
He loosened the strings of her shoes,  
For a saint must go barefoot to Zion  
Or how could the angels enthuse?

They bowed to the yoke of the legend,  
The spider, the moth and the mouse—  
They were sending a real one to Heaven  
And out of their very own house.

Now garbing a saint for a survey  
Entitles the garrets and slums  
To the right of the line with the colors,  
To act as an escort with drums,

To call upon Minn for the mantles  
    Prescribed for a walled-in town,  
To ask for an issue of ermine  
    To broider a new renown.

So the moth and the mouse and the spider,  
    Discarding their old restraint,  
Went forth in the raiment awarded,  
    And Heaven accepted their saint.

## THE READER

### *An Idyl*

I am an ancient lady  
Cross-legged upon a dais,  
Reading of Cleopatra,  
Lesbia, Phryne and Thais.

I am sedate in measure,  
Old enough not to regret,  
Licking a sugared almond,  
Mincing a mild cigarette.

Often I pause to ponder—  
Goodness, who's shaking the dais?  
Surely not Cleopatra,  
Lesbia, Phryne or Thais.

## THE EDICT

Write, said the editor unto the saint,  
Something all dripping with paradise paint,  
Something to jazzle and dazzle and please,  
Something of kneeling and beautiful knees.

You write the story and I'll write the head,  
Margin to margin the copy we'll spread—  
Never a blue pencil fussing a sheet—  
We'll make a story to sling at the street.

Load it with red-headed peppers and thyme,  
Seek not to cincture an innocent rhyme.  
Touch all your visions with life's accolade,  
Only in telling, oh, be not afraid.

Sing of a Jezabel flung from a tower,  
Sing of a Lesbia looting a flower,  
Sing of a Sappho and detail each thrall,  
Finally Phryne who walked on them all.

Make it as coarse as a cobblestone fight,  
Make it as sweet as an old man's delight,  
Put in the pallor and strawberry stain  
So they will read it—and read it again.

## THE HANGMAN'S BOY

Drawn from the silt of the ages,  
Blastoderm girthed to destroy,  
Turning the least of the laddies  
Into a hangman's boy.

Slime from the first of the marshes,  
Aching for formative role,  
Rose and invaded a vestal,  
Tainting an unborn soul.

Tiptoeing down from the primal,  
Back of the date lines of Minn,  
Gloating from Eden to Pottsville  
Over an infant's sin.

Keeping its calendars secret,  
Changing its visage and gear,  
Now as a prince boy or Pomroy,  
Cretin or Cavalier.

Making a half-wit a mother,  
Making a moron a sire;  
Placarding heirs to the portals—  
Fruitage of love's desire.

Drawn from the silt of the ages,  
Older than Odin or Troy—  
Turning a Pottsville juvenile  
Into a hangman's boy.

## HONORABLE MENTION





## THE WARMING PAN

### *Abishag*

When age had David stricken  
They brought to him a maid,  
And there's no use denying  
That she was all afraid.

They chose her for her beauty—  
A Shunammite and dark—  
To carry on a custom  
Much older than the Ark.

'Twas thought the king was freezing—  
Or so the story ran—  
And thus was picked that damsel  
To be a warming pan.

They robed her as a princess,  
She wore a diadem;  
They led her to that chamber  
In old Jerusalem.

\* \* \* \* \*

The prophet got a mention  
For work at Ajalon;  
The Queen of Sheba headlined  
Her thoughts of Solomon.

Whene'er the scribes are busy  
They barely give the name,  
But Abishag of Shunem  
Is certain of her fame.

## DIANA OF THE GARDEN

I was your Saint-Gaudens goddess,  
High o'er the tower stair,  
Topping the dawn's campanile—  
Dian' of Mad'son Square.

Out of a Roman arena  
Rigged I this later fane,  
Fitted my rites to a people,  
Posed as a weather-vane.

Now comes your turbaned appraiser,  
Bent on a barracoon,  
Over the glade where Diana  
Drew on the three-ringed moon,

Marking the walls of my midways—  
Not with love's alphabet—  
Scorning my bow and my arrow,  
Lack of a pantalet.

Even a goddess of copper  
Cools from the hints below,  
Seeing the scaffolds creep upward,  
Hearing the girders go.

Even a goddess may weary,  
Turn to a students' lair,  
Leaving Silenus to offer  
Farewells to Mad'son Square,

Leaving a crony the duties  
Due to the Garden's walls,  
And an old-fashioned libation—  
Loosed when the tower falls.

## THE RENEGADE

*John Paul Jones*

Oh, London Town the screen goes down—behold  
a renegade—  
I'd sell for you the hosen blue from off the  
Boston maid.

The wonder of the thunder when your gilded  
busses roll,  
The beauty and the duty when the Guards go out  
to stroll.

The Moon comes over Tower Hill so tenderly  
and sweet,  
The Night Watch trim the candles dim in Hen-  
rietta Street.

I waste the dark in weeping all because we tipped  
the tea;  
To drop a link and hear it clink may please a  
colony.

But I would sell the Old South just to cross a  
Cheapside sill,  
To lay me down a half a crown and feel the  
fainter's thrill.

The parrot soaks his biscuit and the squirrel bites  
his heir;

A wretch who sells a blue print sketch goes on to  
signal flare.

And so I offer Bunker Hill, the lanes of Lexington,  
That gala day down Yorktown way, you spent to

stack the gun.

A traitoress must ever hold herself within her  
gown

Nor give too much into the clutch of even London Town.

The hunter needs a coxer when he shies the  
highest rail,

The tags upon our battle flags would turn a  
guinea pale.

And so I start with little things to make a sliding  
rate—

There's Molly with the gun swab, and the field  
piece added weight.

The halls of fame declare she had a tot or two of  
gin,

The reason why they do deny she was a heroine.

The sword of Gen'ral Washington, displayed to  
good King George.  
A cracked old bell in Philadel—the lists of Valley  
Forge.

The wonder of the thunder that the Bon Homme  
Richard flung,  
The beauty and the duty when the grappling  
irons clung.

I offer that same Indiaman that wallowed to the  
beams;  
You blew our ports to open courts—we fired  
from the seams.

I offer that stained quarter-deck the Hall of  
Fame doth shun,  
And now I'll put the captain up and let the  
prices run.

He knew that we were going down, the catheads  
were immersed,  
The starboard guns had turned to nuns, the lower  
tier had burst.

He answered when Serapis hailed upon that  
torrid night:  
“We're casting surplus cannon, Sir, we've just  
begun to fight.”

The battle lanterns walk the deck, the broadsides  
hush the groans—  
I place a gaud to top a hoard—the nerve of John  
Paul Jones.



## THE PLEDGE

These are the words of your Judiths  
And Miriams singing at eve:  
"Behold, we are sending levies  
To hearten the ranks and relieve.

" 'Twas only the sign you waited  
From the crone to the ten-year maid.  
We give it—a battle order—  
And it's fight to the last brigade.

"We went to the wells in sorrow  
But we were permitted to draw  
The gloss for the golden guidons  
And the grip of the lion's claw.

"From David to Disraeli—  
From the Bernhardt to Deluge dove,  
We stood by the wells of Zion  
To draw for the ones we love.

" 'Twas Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel,  
Or Deborah, lifting the veil,  
And once came a Shushan Lily—  
The daughter of Abihail.

"Our right is rehearsing visions,  
Our left rests on old Sinai Hill,  
The centre—a harp and tambour,  
A crayon, a chisel, a quill."

The wounded go back to colors,  
The sick are returned to the file,  
Old war maps revert to wadding—  
The new to be scaled to the mile.

It's worth the cries from the litters,  
It's worth all the standards and guns,  
Judith and Miriam pledging  
New legions, their own unborn sons.

# PLUMES



## THE PLAYBOX

To the *Trinket*

The toys of a Tutankhamen  
Are under the king's high chair;  
The queen hath her doll-house in order  
With all of the miniatures there.

But sometimes they sigh for the splendors—  
The strays of the playbox hoard,  
The light of a Nightingale lantern,  
The glimmer of Arthur's sword,

The bugle of Balaklava,  
The pipes in the Havelock van,  
The faith of a gearless Godiva,  
The ending to Kubla Khan.

Tho' lost in the dominant seventh  
The hunters are down on their knees;  
They are after the strays of the playbox,  
For Luxor had nothing like these.

## LOVE LANE

In old Love Lane on Brooklyn Heights  
There's an ebony bob from Arabian Nights;  
She sings each eve of the Tom Moore rose—  
And the neighbors shut off their radios.

The people who pass through Henry Street,  
They presently go with lagging feet,  
For in old Love Lane a cantatrice shade  
Is taking the trills of Adelaide.

Shaking the sistrum—a blackberry bob,  
Dulcing the treble and daring the sob;  
Never a wonder that listeners perch  
On the mansion steps near Plymouth Church.

They hear the birds by a waterfall,  
They see the rose that was last of all;  
The dim garages grow less profane,  
For something with pinions is down in the lane.

## THE PEACOCK FEATHERS

I went forth in the morning,  
Down to the ten-cent store,  
Found them arranging feathers—  
Plumes that the peacock wore.

Found them parading wonders—  
Never so great a crime—  
Selling the peacock's feathers,  
Two for a single dime.

Straight from the stands I drew them,  
Even the broken ones,  
Cheers from the paper flowers,  
Smiles from the pasteboard nuns.

Only five words I uttered—  
Thus do the gods prevail—  
Walked off with forty feathers,  
All of the peacock's tail.

## LEDA AND THE LARK

By the pagoda and just as the dusk  
Scattered her odors of balsam and musk,

There came a tiger cat stalking a lark  
Down in the pastures of Washington Park.

Sunken the head of the pillaging beast,  
Staging a foray to flavor a feast.

Trees were a-tremble, the breeze held its breath,  
Arcady's acolyte going to death.

Leda was airing a swan just at dark  
Down in the pastures of Washington Park.

Shielding her cygnet but faint to the nave,  
Hailed she a hilltop for power to save.

Lords of Olympus, oh rise ye and gird,  
Leda is calling to help a poor bird.

Grave as gorilla from tropical glade,  
Vulcan attended to rally the maid.

Knowing that simple things always prevail  
Dropped he his sledge on that tiger cat's tail.

Off to a cavern in Masterpiece Row  
Galloped a spasm hallooing with woe,



Arcady's acolyte took to the trees,  
Leda sank down on her beautiful knees.

Vulcan, unsandaled, was toeing the sods,  
Dreaming a paragraph primped for the gods.

Yet to make certain he dangled a word:  
"Maiden, why grieve over one silly bird?"

Leda responded though white to the ear:  
"Skylarks and linnets are not worth a tear.

"Fright o'er my peerless pet—that made me  
wan;

"Sometimes I wish 'twas a mythical swan."

## THE PICTURE BOOK QUEEN

She dwelt in a picture book palace  
By a border all printed in red,  
In the splendor of primitive candor,  
A queen who had never been wed.

Her damsels she tied to her sandals  
With promptings and girdles of gelt,  
And not till the very last chapter  
Could anyone guess what she felt.

Because of her delicate largess  
They saw not what might have been seen—  
The page from the Porphery Mountains  
Who served but a picture book queen.

His eyes were two sapphires but bigger,  
His lips bore the sign of the plum,  
His mission to straighten a cushion—  
To gaze, and forever be dumb.

The summer began oh, so simply,  
The minstrels were issued new lutes,  
But late in July a squire dozing  
Grew spurs on his Cordovan boots.

And presently knights went a-wooing,  
The witches were working in shifts,  
Betrothals won greetings with leaseholds  
And other encouraging gifts.

The fountains were cluttered with philtres—  
Oh who could have done such a thing?  
The sages dispensed with the ages,  
Each scullery girl got a ring.

The weddings were set for a saint's eve,  
The Pryor addressed the brigade,  
In the distance the Porphery Mountains  
Smiled down on that bridal parade.

Her Majesty heard from a tower  
That honeymoon multitude cheer.  
In the splendor of primitive candor  
She waved to each pillion and spear.

The cavalcade slowly departed,  
The darkness deleted the vale,  
And then came a page with a candle  
To tell of the end of the tale.



## THE REFUGEE

I shall go back to the sea-shell,  
Beginning all over again,  
Back to the heart of the garnet,  
Back to the butterfly's vein.

There I shall 'scape all the scholars,  
Giants who chant of belief;  
Pebbles will open their caverns,  
Pastures will call from a leaf.

There I will tarry with small things,  
Choosing my pin-point domain,  
Finding a star in an atom  
Carries the heavenly strain.

Willing to worship the little,  
Even the specks of the rust,  
Counting my trifles as priceless—  
Since peace sits as one in the dust.

## THE LAW

A peacock on a pedestal  
In beauty doth prevail,  
Yet if he had a thousand eyes  
He could not see his tail.

Fate rules he may not turn to gaze  
For e'en the briefest span  
Whene'er he spreads in green and gold  
His very famous fan.

\* \* \* \* \*

The rower chained to galley bench  
From noontime unto noon,  
He never sees his own trireme  
From viewpoint of the moon.

The bulkheads like a bandage bind,  
The deckbeams heed no sigh,  
And only when the galley rolls  
The oar ports show the sky.

## DESTINY

The wind doth wander up and down  
Forever seeking for a crown;  
The rose in stillness on a stem  
Inherits love's own diadem.

## THE WARNING

Oh, when a gleaming motor glides  
From out a dusky haze,  
Bethink you of the flowers there  
Within the tonneau vase.

## THE DISCOVERER

Mystical, sorrowful, stiff and still,  
A sparrow stood on a wintry sill.

The night wind laden with icy sleet  
Ruffled his feathers and stung his feet,

But his right eye peered through a window pane  
And visioned the warmth of a June-time lane.

He saw the lights from a fireplace fall  
Over the patterns on somebody's wall.

His heart was thrilled by a paper rose—  
He had found at last where the summer goes.















